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Letter dated 23 February 2018 from the representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Peru and Sweden, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, hereby transmit a summary note of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group held on 30 January 2018 on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gustavo **Meza-Cuadra**
Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Jonathan **Allen**
Chargé d'affaires of the United Kingdom to the United Nations

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Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security: summary of the meeting on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin held 30 January 2018

On 30 January 2018, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin as a follow-up to last year's meeting on that topic, summarized in the relevant summary note (S/2017/625, annex). Members of the Security Council were briefed by the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon; the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Deputy Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Ruby Sandhu-Rojon; and the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Anatole Ayissi, accompanied by relevant representatives of both missions and the Nigeria country team. At the time of the meeting, the Council was adopting a presidential statement on peace consolidation in West Africa (S/PRST/2018/3), in which the Council, apart from calling for ensuring women's participation in elections in the regions and their appointment to senior government positions, and emphasizing their role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding, emphasized specifically the need to take measures to increase the number of women in the security sector and the national bodies dealing with the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin.

Participants listed some positive developments that had occurred since last year's Informal Expert Group meeting. Both the visit by the Security Council to the Lake Chad Basin in March 2017 and Council resolution 2349 (2017) were highlighted as good practices in integrating gender equality considerations and many of the recommendations made by the Group. The joint visit of the Deputy Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict had brought continued attention to gender issues in this regional crisis. The international community had scaled up its humanitarian response and early recovery activities in 2017, reaching more people, averting a famine and containing a cholera outbreak. The Governments in the region had claimed a series of military victories against Boko Haram and the rescue of hundreds of abductees, including through negotiations for the release of 82 of the Chibok schoolgirls, who were receiving comprehensive support. The Government of Nigeria had adopted its second national action plan on women and peace and security — the first one that was tailored to the issues arising from the internal conflict — and Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau had adopted state-level action plans. At the end of 2017, Cameroon had also adopted its first national action plan on women and peace and security. Additional human rights capacity had been deployed in Nigeria to liaise with and help train the Multinational Joint Task Force and enhance the monitoring of human rights violations in the north, including for gender-based violence, and a gender adviser had recently joined UNOCA. An adviser from the Gender Standby Capacity project (GenCap) was being deployed to Maiduguri, in the epicentre of the conflict, and women's protection and empowerment was integrated throughout the humanitarian response plan for 2018, including to increase women's leadership roles in camp management, coordination and aid distribution. The gender-based violence subcluster had provided services, including dignity kits and

psychosocial counselling, to 7,000 women and girls and was working to strengthen community-based structures and responses, including community-based compliance mechanisms to report abuses in the camps.

However, the overall situation continued to be dire. The number of people affected by food insecurity had actually grown in 2017. Close to 14 million people were affected by the conflict in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe in Nigeria alone, and 54 per cent of the internally displaced in Nigeria were women and girls. The situation was still not safe for return in most areas, and the military operations against Boko Haram also disrupted livelihoods. Meanwhile, in the camps, sexual exploitation and abuse continued to be reported against camp officials, host communities and security forces. More than 4,000 women and girls had been abducted by Boko Haram to date, and while many had been rescued, new abductions continued to take place. Communities often rejected female survivors and referred to their children born of rape as "bad blood". The trend of using women and girls in particular as suicide bombers had only increased. For example, in 2017 Boko Haram had used 45 boys and 100 girls as suicide bombers in Nigeria. Six out of 10 women had experienced one or more forms of gender-based violence. To make matters worse, a regional conflict between herders and farmers, now affecting 22 out of 36 states in Nigeria, was reportedly killing more women and girls than the Boko Haram crisis, and the countries in the Lake Chad Basin were affected by multiple security crises, from separatist movements in Biafra in Nigeria and the Anglophone region of Cameroon, to the impact of the Sahel crisis in Chad and the Niger. Participants noted the continued lack of opportunities for women's meaningful participation in political dialogues, non-compliance with existing quota provisions in Chad and the Niger, and a lack of synergy among women's networks and organizations in the region. In 2017, there had been an increase in reported and verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence in Nigeria, to 997, which likely reflected a significant undercount. While the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict had been engaged in supporting the judicial response and the Government's special prosecution unit, the complementarity report of the International Criminal Court noted that, to date, not one member of Boko Haram had been prosecuted for sexual and gender-based violence. A few days after the meeting of the Informal Expert Group, as part of a mass trial of Boko Haram detainees, Nigeria had convicted the first person to be brought to justice for the kidnapping of the Chibok girls.

Member States asked questions about the Multinational Joint Task Force and its attention to gender issues, including the gender expertise requested in last year's resolution and not yet deployed, and sought clarity on the role of human rights expertise in dealing with abuses by the national security forces. They enquired about ways of reporting on the extensive gender-related provisions in resolution 2349 (2017), given the limitations of the periodic reports by UNOWAS and UNOCA, covering many other countries in the region, and were interested in the coordination between those missions on gender issues and their engagement with women's civil society organizations. Finally, they asked whether anyone was looking into and addressing the gender dimensions of the conflict between farmers and herders. In response, participants noted that human rights desks set up by the Government of Nigeria were only now beginning to receive complaints from the camps for internally displaced persons, after receiving mostly internal complaints by members of the military and their families. They highlighted the important role of ECOWAS, which included 15 gender-specific indicators out of the 66 that it used in its early warning framework. ECOWAS was also in the early stages of conducting a study on the conflict between farmers and herders, and would address the gender dimension and the role of women in community-driven development and peacebuilding. UNOWAS and UNOCA would conduct a joint mission to Chad that would have gender issues in the conflict as an important focus, and UNOWAS and UN-Women co-chaired a

working group on women, youth, and peace and security in the whole region, but they noted that there was more structured and regular engagement with women's networks with regard to the Sahel crisis than for the Lake Chad Basin crisis. UNOCA noted its intention to establish a network of women mediators in Central Africa.

UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, highlighted the recommendations that had not been implemented since last year's meeting. These included:

- Deploying gender expertise to the Multinational Joint Task Force and ensuring the systematic engagement of women's organizations with regional organizations such as the Multinational Joint Task Force or the Lake Chad Basin Commission.
- Mapping women's networks and their contribution to prevention and early warning in the region, and what kind of support they were presently receiving, from international partners or from the Governments in the region.
- Mapping the gender expertise, representation of women, and resources dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment by the regional and national institutions leading the response, from ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, to the relevant national ministries and institutions in all four countries.
- Council members should continue to raise questions about the screening, detention, return, de-radicalization and rehabilitation of women and girls and their relatives, the overall impact of counter-terrorism and military operations on women and girls and on women's organizations, and the need for proper consultation with women and women's organizations on all matters related to closures of camps for internally displaced persons and returns of internally displaced persons and refugees.

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting, thanking the briefers for their participation in the Informal Expert Group, and committed to following up with different actors to discuss which ones could take the lead in implementing the above-mentioned recommendations and resolution 2349 (2017).